

Frequently Asked Questions - Volunteer Docent Training Programme 2018-2019

What is the Volunteer Docent Training Programme?

The Docent Training programme prepares members of the Friends of the Museums (FOM) to guide in one of 8 museums and heritage institutions in Singapore, and outdoor heritage trails.

- **National Museum of Singapore (NMS):** presents the history of Singapore from the 14th century to the contemporary period, complemented by focused galleries on Singapore's culture and heritage.
- **Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM):** highlights Singapore's role as one of the region's great trade emporia and port cities as well as showcasing the history and culture of Southeast Asia.
- **Singapore Art Museum-Gillman Barracks (SAM/GB):** focuses on international contemporary art, specialising in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Gillman Barracks is a contemporary arts cluster in Singapore that is home to celebrated art galleries, the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (CCA), and some non-profit visual arts organisations.
- **Peranakan Museum (TPM):** showcases the life and rites of typical Peranakan families - a unique community found only in Southeast Asia.
- **Malay Heritage Centre (MHC):** a heritage institution museum located in the former Sultan's palace and showcases the history, culture and heritage of Malay Singaporeans.
- **Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH):** a heritage institution highlighting Dr Sun's revolutionary activities in SEA and Singapore's contribution to the 1911 Chinese Revolution.
- **Indian Heritage Centre (IHC):** Singapore's newest heritage institution featuring the history, culture and heritage of Indian Singaporeans.
- **Singapore Tyler Print Institute** is a creative workshop and contemporary art gallery, committed to promoting artistic experimentation in the mediums of print and paper.
- **URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails** is a cooperation between the Urban Redevelopment Authority and Friends of the Museums, organising walking tours in the different historical neighbourhoods of Chinatown.

FOM's training programmes incorporate a series of foundation talks, lectures, field trips and activities specific to each museum.

Which museums will be offering training courses in 2018-2019?

National Museum of Singapore (NMS), Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) will start training in September 2018

Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall (SYSNMH), Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) and URA/FOM Chinatown Heritage Trails – next training dates will be announced in due course.

The Singapore Art Museum-Gillman Barracks (SAM-GB) and The Peranakan Museum (TPM) will not be training this year as the museums are / will be undergoing a major revamp.

STPI only trains every other year and is expecting to have another training in 2020.

Dates of Training:

	Starts	End of lectures	End of training
ACM	Sept 4, 2018	March 2019	May 2019
NMS	Sept 4, 2018	March 2019	May 2019
IHC	Sept 4, 2018	January 2019	March 2019

Will I be paid for guiding?

No, this is a voluntary position. FOM members may not receive remuneration for their FOM-related activities.

Are there any holidays?

All official Singapore holidays are recognised by the training teams. In addition, there are no classes during these holiday periods:

October Break	Sat Oct 13 – Sun Oct 21
Deepavali	Tue Nov 6
Christmas	Sat Dec 15 – Sun Jan 6
Chinese New Year	Sat Feb 2 – Sun Feb 10

On which days of the week is training held?ACM:

Compulsory lecture day on Tuesday (9:00 – 13:30) and Friday mornings (10:00 -12:00).
Occasional field trips on Thursdays

NMS:

Compulsory lecture day on Tuesday (9:00 – 13:30)
Field trips are mostly on Thursday morning and are highly recommended.

IHC:

Compulsory training days on Tuesday (9:00 – 13:30) and Thursday (9:00 – 12:00)

What should I take into consideration before applying?

Please consider the time commitment carefully as it will impact your other commitments—to your family (partner, children, perhaps parents), and any professional commitments. The courses are time-consuming. If you fall behind, it is very difficult to catch up. Please consider any other commitments or plans (holidays, family planning, etc.) you may have that may prevent you from completing the course.

English is not my native language. Can I still be a guide?

All instructions will be in English and all tours are conducted in English. All guides must be proficient English speakers. However, many of our guides speak English as a second language and do a fantastic job. You do not need to be a native speaker, but consider carefully if this could impact your ability to keep up in the reading, in addition to how comfortable you are presenting in English--before you apply.

I'm nervous speaking in public. Can I learn to be a good guide?

Being a museum guide involves talking to people about the museum and its exhibits. However, it is less like a speech and more like a conversation. During the training, you will get lots of practice and advice on how to conduct an effective tour. Specific tips, coaching and regular practice will help you gain confidence and learn this style of public speaking. Go on as many tours as possible before the course begins and you will see that everyone has a different style. We will help you develop yours.

How much time will I need to commit to my training experience?

With required course lectures, required and optional reading, independent research, the preparation of gallery talks and tour papers (as well as participating in group field trips), you should be prepared to commit a good share of your time to your training. A good estimate would be the rough equivalent of one 16-week college-level course. Your English language skills, learning style, etc. will all be contributing factors. FOM docents take their commitment very seriously. We want to do the best job we can. This is only possible by fully participating in the training programme (and after the course has ended, fulfilling a commitment to guide a minimum number of tours in a given time period).

What happens if I miss a session?

Any missed session is very hard to recover from, given the amount of reading, research and preparation for gallery talks and tour papers that accompany it. If you know now that you will be miss more than two training days, please consider postponing training until a year when you are able to give the commitment required.

For ACM, IHC and NMS, you are allowed to miss a maximum of 2 sessions per training programme. For all the other museums you can only miss one session per programme.

How much work do I have to hand in?

You will be asked to research and write up to four gallery talks (essays) of varying lengths, which you will then present to your peers and trainers. This will form the basis of your tour (or final) paper. A tour paper is a sample script of a one-hour tour that you will give to visitors in the museum. As a guide, you will continue to fine tune this tour and develop new ones as time goes by, but this initial tour paper demonstrates your knowledge of the museum and the current exhibitions to your trainers and prepares you to begin your guiding career.

What happens after I submit my tour paper?

At the end of the course, experienced FOM docents will review your tour paper and discuss it with you ensuring all the information is correct, covers the requisite galleries, has a theme and a good flow. Then you will be scheduled to conduct your Mentor Tour. A Mentor Tour is an actual public tour within the museum, conducted under the guidance of an experienced FOM docent. This serves as your final review by your trainers.

How much are the training course fees?

The training course fees for 2018-19 Docent Training Programme are as follows:

	Full fee	Senior citizen (over 60 years old) / Student
NMS & ACM	SGD 550	SGD 360
IHC	SGD 350	SGD 230

You must be a member of FOM in order to be an FOM docent. If you are not currently a member, you must join FOM before you can join the course. Joint and family memberships are also available. You can sign up for membership and the docent training online via www.fom.sg.

Do I get a refund if I sign up for the course, pay the fee, attend a few sessions, then decide it's not for me?

No. Once you have started the Docent Training Programme and have paid the fee, there are no refunds because a number of expenses will already have been incurred by FOM and the training team on your behalf.

What is my commitment after the course?

When you are accepted into the FOM Docent Training Programme, you will be required to sign a form that commits you to actively guide (up to two tours each month) for at least one year following the completion of your training.

You can, of course, guide more tours each month and for a longer period of time. Tour times vary by museum but are usually scheduled between 10:00 am and 7:00 pm Mon-Fri, and include both regular and student tours. You also commit to keeping current with the exhibitions in the museum by regularly attending docent ongoing training programs (DOTs), curator briefings and walkthroughs, etc.

What can I already do to prepare myself for docent training?

Most museums have prepared a so called "summer reading list" with suggestions for books, novels and documentaries to read and watch. You can find them on the docent training page of the FOM website www.fom.sg

I recently trained to be a docent at a museum and have not yet completed my one-year commitment to guiding there. Can I join another training programme?

Yes, but you will need to follow the normal application and interview process and be accepted in the new museum in which you want to train. Also keep in mind that all FOM-trained guides are required to actively guide (up to two tours each month) for at least one year after the completion of training. Please consider carefully any current guiding commitments before taking on additional commitments.

Can I do two Docent Training Programmes at the same time?

No, you cannot. Each Docent Training Programme is intensive and cannot be combined with a second Training Programme at the same time, no matter how experienced you already are.

I already guide in one of Singapore's museums. Must I still attend the Foundation talks?

Yes. The Foundation talks are changed and improved every year and are an integral part of the FOM Docent Training Programme.

How many people will participate in the training?

The number of trainees is limited and the FOM Docent Training Programme is quite popular. We accept trainees on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to an initial interview.

Anything else I should know?

You must have regular access to the internet and an e-mail address. Virtually all communication for trainees and existing docents is sent or accessed through the internet and e-mails. In addition, you must be comfortable using a computer to access on-line information, write your tour papers, submit them electronically and connect to group websites. Whatsapp is also used for quick or urgent mobile communication for training groups.

How do I sign up?

You can sign up online via our website www.fom.sg under Docent Training.

Where can I learn more about the Docent Training Programme?

There will be a Public Information Meeting (PIM) on 17 May.

- **Thursday May 17, 2018**, 10 am – 12:00 pm.
Gallery Theatre (basement) in the National Museum Singapore, 93 Stamford Road, Singapore 178897
No registration needed

CONTACT INFORMATION:

E-mail: FOMdocenttraining@gmail.com for any questions regarding the Docent Training Programmes

Website: www.fom.sg

Please note: we have made every effort to provide accurate information in this document. However, minor changes may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances.